



Capitol Comments

Another Busy Week

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March 20th, 2015



With Governor Greg Abbott, Captain Brett Baker Flagg, his father Brett Baker Flag Sr., his mother Lisa Flagg, his girlfriend Lea Segwick, and my wife Lisa.

It was another productive week in Austin. Five new bills out of our office were presented in committee hearings, the House passed its first bills of the Session, and we honored Captain Brett Baker Flagg Jr., a soldier from District 65. Back in the district, there has been exciting developments in business and infrastructure. All in all, the week was a win for House District 65 and for Texas.

Highlights

Captain Brett Baker Flagg

This week, House District 65 was honored to recognize one of our fine men in uniform. Captain Brett Baker Flagg, Jr., U.S. Army, is a 2006 graduate of Trinity Christian Academy, and a 2010 West Point graduate. Since being commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the United States Army, Captain Flagg has honorably served our country with a tour of duty in Afghanistan, where he was awarded the Bronze Star medal, and is now stationed at Fort Hood where he serves as a squadron logistics officer.

My office hosted Baker and his family at the Capitol this week where he was honored on the House floor and met Governor Abbott. We are truly indebted to Captain Flagg and all service men and women who defend our country.

First Bill Heard

On Tuesday the House voted out the first bill of the 84th Legislative Session. House Bill 10 is a comprehensive human trafficking bill. During the 81st Session, the Legislature created the Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force. HB 10 enacts the recommendations made by the task force. It was an honor to vote to help end human trafficking in Texas. Protecting our most vulnerable and exploited population is a priority for myself and for your entire Texas Legislature.

House Bill 11

Another piece of important legislation that was passed out of the House was HB 11, aimed at creating a long-term solution to Texas' border security issues. HB 11 authorizes an additional 300 DPS troopers along the border, criminalizes the act of inducing a person to enter the country illegally, and strengthens state smuggling laws targeting organized crime syndicates attempting to enter the country. As a coauthor of HB 11, I'm proud to say that your Texas House has passed the most comprehensive border safety bill in the country.



As a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security and Public Safety I attended a demonstration tour with DPS on the Texas-Mexico border in 2013.

Back in the District

Hyundai Ribbon Cutting Ceremony



My district director, Ebony Daughtry, at the Hyundai regional office grand opening in Lewisville with representatives from Van Hyundai and the Lewisville Chamber of Commerce including Ray Hernandez, the president.

Back in the district business is always advancing. Van Hyundai recently held a ribbon cutting ceremony for their induction into the Lewisville Chamber of Commerce. They are one of the fastest growing dealers in the Dallas area. We are thrilled to have excellent businesses like this one serving the good people of House District 65.

35 Express Project Update

As work on I-35 continues, it is the desire of your HD 65 State Representative team to keep you informed of progress so you may plan your trip accordingly through the area.

Fox Avenue Bridge, Lewisville: Demolition of the Fox Avenue Bridge will begin tonight, March 20th. Closures begin on I-35E and frontage roads at Fox Avenue as the south half of the bridge comes down. Below is the timeline for this weekend's diversions:

- Friday, 7pm to Saturday, 8am: Southbound frontage road at Fox Avenue will be reduced to one lane and shifted west. Two left lanes of the north-bound side will also be closed.
- Saturday, 8pm to Sunday, 10am: Northbound frontage road reduced to one lane. Northbound lanes of I-35E and two southbound lanes diverted until completion of demolition.

Committee Action

Business and Industry

During this week's House Committee on Business and Industry hearing, the committee heard nine bills on many different topics. The State Auditor's office also presented their report on the Office of Injured Employee Counsel, and the committee discussed the findings. Here are a few of the bills we heard:

- House Bill 58 prevents discrimination in personal leave policies for sick children. With this bill, it would be unlawful for an employer to have a personal leave policy to care for a sick biological child or adopted child that does not extend to an employee caring for their sick foster child.
- House Bill 1265 would include mailing certain unrequested and unsolicited goods or services in the definition of "false, misleading or deceptive acts or practices," unless a specific disclaimer is largely printed at the top and bottom of each page.

Transportation

The Transportation Committee met again this Thursday, this time for nearly seven hours. We voted several bills out of committee including a bill to reduce the amount of future debt used to build roads. We also heard testimony on bills relating to the operation of tolling authorities across the state. We are working hard to solve the transportation problems in the state. Texas deserves better than our current traffic delays, constant accidents, and poor road conditions.

It was great to have Denton County Judge Mary Horn in Austin to testify and work with me on protecting the transportation interest of the citizens in Denton County.

Subcommittee on Long-term Transportation Infrastructure Planning

Being one of only two second term members to Chair a *permanent* subcommittee, I am humbled and honored at the responsibility that goes with this position. This subcommittee will meet for the first time next Tuesday at 8:00 a.m. Please feel free to go on to the House website and tune in live. Long-term infrastructure planning is key to our transportation problem in Texas. You will be kept updated on this subcommittee as session continues.

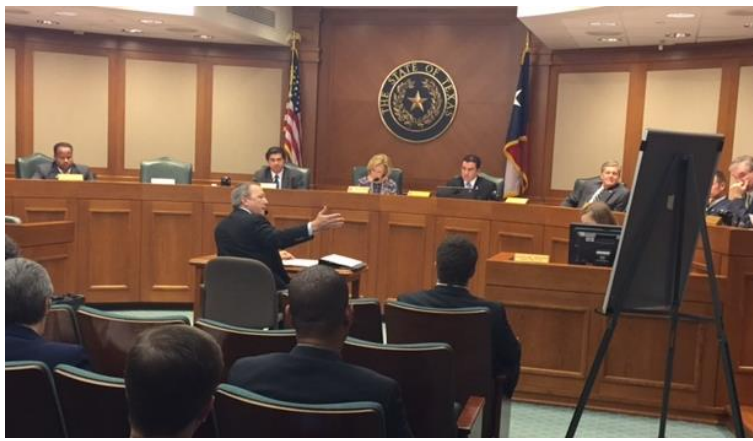
Bill Update

We had a lot of exciting work this week on my bills. Five were laid out in committee, one was reported favorably out of committee, and still more were referred to committees. The preparation by the staff that goes into preparing me for these bill presentations is incredible. A special thanks to one of our interns, Christopher, for the work he did on HB 279!

Laid Out in Committee

HB 279

On Tuesday, this bill on public school choice for disabled individuals was heard in the Public Education Committee. The bill would allow disabled individuals to move from one public school to another through the existing and underutilized Public Education Grant program.



Laying out HB 281 and HB 1284, two bills that combat the expansion of the Camelot landfill in House District 65

HB 281

On Tuesday my two bills on the Camelot Landfill were heard before the Environmental Regulation Committee. The first bill, HB 281, would prevent the TCEQ from approving landfill permits unless the municipality in which the landfill is located and the municipality bordering agree on the permit. It also requires TCEQ to involve local legislators in the process. A special thank you to City Councilman Jeff Andonian from Carrollton and Lewisville Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Neil Ferguson for coming down to testify!

HB 1284

The second bill concerning the Camelot Landfill, HB 1284, was also heard on Tuesday. This bill would require TCEQ to involve legislators before approving a permit for a landfill. It also requires a copy of the application to be submitted to both the mayor and the health authority of the surrounding municipalities. The Camelot Landfill issue is something that many of you are deeply concerned about, I am doing my utmost to address the issue.

HB 1288

HB 1288 eliminates straight party ticket voting. To clarify, the bill would not eliminate party affiliation. A ballot would still list parties next to names. A voter could still go down the ballot and vote for every candidate in their party; they just cannot do it with one punch. The intent is to encourage voters to be aware of the down-ballot candidates, especially as down ballot positions have more of a direct impact on voters' day-to-day lives (such as County Commissioner, Justice of the Peace, or State Representative).

HB 280

HB 280 is a bill that increases government transparency. In order to better inform Texans of the use of the State Water Implementation Fund, HB 280 seeks to require additional information regarding the usage of the State Water Implementation Fund to be posted and regularly updated online.

Upcoming Events and Dates

Bill Hearings

I will be laying out the following bills in committee hearings during this upcoming week:

HB 20- *Relating to the operations of and transportation planning and expenditures by the Texas Department of Transportation and local transportation entities.*

- Will be heard by the Subcommittee on Long-term Infrastructure Planning on March 24th

HB 1285- *Relating to the authority of certain personal protection officers to carry certain weapons.*

- Will be heard by the Committee on Homeland Security and Public Safety on March 24th

First Responder Day- 3/25

On Wednesday, March 25, the Legislature will honor the heroes that are there for Texans when they need them the most. At 10:00 AM there will be a rally on the South Steps of the Capitol. I am so humbled by the sacrifices made by these wonderful men and women. Look forward to seeing first responders from House District 65 on this important day.

3rd Annual Autism Awareness Day at the Capitol- 4/2

On Thursday, April 2, I will join Representative Larry Gonzales and Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr., for the 3rd Annual Autism Awareness Day at the Capitol to raise awareness for Autism. There will be a joint press conference about Autism legislation and a resolution read on the House floor to recognize everyone in attendance for their efforts to raise awareness and provide services for children with Autism and their families. More details will follow soon.

As always, please stay in touch with me and feel free to drop by my District Office, follow me on Facebook or find me on the House Website to hear about upcoming events.

Thank you, it is truly an honor and a privilege to serve as your State Representative.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron", with a stylized, cursive script.

Ron Simmons
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